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DRAFT FRAMEWORK OF THE REVISED UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM-WIDE PLAN OF ACTION FOR AFRICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

1. One of the benefits derived from the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD) is the understanding that agencies and programmes of the United Nations system need to work better together. An important objective in the strengthening of coordination in the United Nations system is to build and improve upon the experience of UNPAAERD.

2. At its thirtieth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), recommended that the Secretary-General prepare a system-wide plan of action for Africa. At its thirty-second session, CPC recommended that the link between the System-wide Plan and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s be clarified.

3. The integrated approach, which encourages combined efforts of several organizations in different sectors with different strengths to attain shared objectives, has been promoted by the Secretary-General himself through a unified approach now being applied in many projects. The combined efforts of the United Nations system against acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and desertification and in other areas testify to this approach.

4. The System-wide Plan was perceived as a vehicle to follow up, within the United Nations system as a whole, to General Assembly resolutions 45/253 and 45/255, both of 21 December 1990, making Africa one of the five priorities of the United Nations, hence emphasizing the need stated in the New Agenda for additionality of resources allocated to the continent. This encourages United Nations agencies and bodies to accord high priority to the implementation of the Plan, thus ensuring that it is reflected in their medium-term plans and programmes.

B. Objectives

5. The linkage between the System-wide Plan and the New Agenda first led to the adoption of a time-frame for the Plan encompassing the year 2000, the same as for the New Agenda. Secondly, it led CPC to decide that the Plan would be updated following the preliminary, mid-term and final reviews of the New Agenda, in 1994, 1997 and 2001. 1/ Thirdly, with the coming into force of major regional agreements, including the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, and the formulation of relevant United Nations system strategies, the United Nations system will ensure that their implementation is in harmony with the objectives of the New Agenda.

6. The purpose of the first revision of the Plan is, in the first instance, to reflect the new imperatives emerging from the preliminary review of the New Agenda. Secondly, it aims to take the initial Plan a step forward. The intention is not to present an overview of the activities of the United Nations

organizations, but rather to set key priority sectors that will be at the focus of cooperative action within the United Nations system.

7. This approach, derived from General Assembly resolutions 46/151 of 18 December 1991, establishing the New Agenda, and 48/214 of 23 December 1993, adopted following the preliminary review of the New Agenda, is in line with the initial design of the System-wide Plan, which is to provide a dynamic and flexible framework for concerted and coordinated action by the United Nations system.

II. GENERAL ORIENTATION AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

A. Policy considerations

8. In its resolution 46/151, the General Assembly requested the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to take appropriate measures in order to implement the commitments contained in the New Agenda. In the annex to that resolution, it specifically requested the various organizations and specialized agencies, in their respective areas and sectors, to devise specific programmes for Africa that were consistent with the elements of the New Agenda, and to devote adequate resources for their implementation. The Assembly also requested them to contribute to ensuring an efficient follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the New Agenda.

9. The revised System-wide Plan of Action would respond to these requests by promoting greater harmonization of policies and strategies being pursued by the organizations of the system in relation to Africa. It would integrate the priority elements of the New Agenda and form the basis for coordinated system-wide action. It would underscore areas which are likely to be identified by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) as priority elements for the United Nations system response to African economic recovery and development. It would indicate financial resources that will be made available to fund these elements, and define a sequencing in the implementation of activities in the priority areas. A timetable for their implementation should be prepared with tangible benchmarks and an indication of the short-, medium- and long-term perspectives.

10. The revised System-wide Plan would also promote a coordinated and effective response by the United Nations system in support of African economic recovery and development by stimulating productive consultations with Africa's development partners and making effective use of and increasing financial resources for African development.

B. Overall strategy

11. The ultimate objective of the strategy is to promote the process of African economic recovery and sustainable development. This process should be conceived as a comprehensive sustainable development approach where the criteria of efficiency, equity and sustainability are carefully integrated within a coherent and operational framework of the System-wide Plan. In this approach, efficiency implies the optimum use of national resources; equity calls for poverty alleviation and introducing measures for human resource development, including access by vulnerable groups of the population to basic needs of production and nutrition intake; and sustainability aims at the conservation of the fragile natural resource base for use by present and future generations.

C. Gender dimension of development

12. Although there is now a wide recognition that African women play a crucial role in the growth and development of the region, that recognition is not always translated into development policies and plans. Consequently, development programmes do not sufficiently reflect the actual productive and reproductive work done by women, nor their potential contribution to African development.

13. To address the general lack of attention to gender concerns and to ensure an effective implementation of the System-wide Plan, it is important to underscore the fact that the problem of the participation of women should not be perceived only as an efficiency issue. Indeed, a more sustained development demands an inclusive reliance on all human resources, of which women form a major group. The gender approach is crucial because it goes beyond just the issue of efficiency and more production of individual women or men to the well-being of the community as a whole.

III. AFRICA'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION AND CHALLENGES

A. Overall assessment

14. African countries have entered the 1990s with multifaceted crises in such major areas as food security, population, housing, public health, education, energy, industrial production, trade, debt and the environment. During the first four years of the present decade, the gross domestic product of the region as a whole grew on average by 1.5 per cent. This is barely half of the regional population growth rate, reinforcing a decline in per capita income and a further slide into poverty.

15. The situation of the food and agriculture sector, the backbone of the economies of most African countries, has not improved significantly. The agriculture sector made only a modest recovery in 1993 in spite of improved weather conditions in several countries, though drought conditions persisted in the Maghreb subregions. However, food production remained a cause for concern as some of the most critical areas of assistance and emergency relief in 1993 included food assistance to alleviate the suffering of populations of areas affected by conflict; a high level of emergency food distribution; and support

for desert locust control operations. The level of availability in major food commodities stagnated where it did not deteriorate.

16. The four main factors responsible for the poor economic performance of Africa, which continued in 1993 to exercise a baleful influence on growth, are the continuing civil conflicts and political crises in some African countries; natural disasters, especially the drought in two subregions; weak and non-diversified economic structures and the international economic environment, marked by unfavourable markets and recessionary conditions in many of the leading industrialized countries.

17. The export of commodities from sub-Saharan Africa declined by almost 15 per cent during 1990-1992 and the value of exports in 1992 hardly exceeded its 1990 level of about $80 billion. By contrast, imports rose from $77 billion in 1990 to $83 billion in 1992, a situation that further increased the current account deficit, estimated at approximately $10 billion in 1992.

18. While the overall economic situation remains troubling, not all African countries are in decline. The importance of social and economic reforms has generally been recognized. They are pursued in many countries and need external support for their implementation.

B. Critical issues and challenges

19. The critical issues and challenges of African countries include the following:

1. Population pressure

20. The economic development of Africa has not kept pace with its population growth rates and urbanization. Population growth rates exceeded economic growth in 32 African countries during the 1980s. Only in eight countries were economic growth rates consistently higher. Rapid population growth rates, therefore, pose a challenge to African countries. Sustained efforts are needed to bring population growth more in line with economic development.

2. Weak human resource base

21. Africa has made tremendous efforts in promoting human resource development programmes with positive effects on health and education. However, these efforts are far from being sufficient. Sustained efforts are needed in the areas of health and education, not only of rural but also of urban populations to enhance their capacity to produce and process food and agricultural commodities; the empowerment of women; formation and development of middle-level managerial personnel; reduction in the brain drain; institutional and capacity-building; and creation of jobs.

3. Gender disparities

22. African women provide substantial labour inputs to productive and reproductive work in their societies and economies. This contribution includes work done in household maintenance. In virtually all communities, women are involved in trade and income-earning activities, which contribute substantially to economic growth and development in local and national economies. However, they continue to experience a lack of access to resources such as land, credit, training and technology. They are also still largely excluded from opportunities to make decisions and share in power that can determine the direction of change and development.

23. The persistence of gender disparities is an obstacle to African development. Therefore, gender disparity has to be addressed as both a strategic and a programmatic issue in implementing the System-wide Plan.

4. Poverty

24. The challenge of poverty alleviation in Africa has assumed greater urgency in the 1990s than it had during the independence era of the 1960s. Aside from the political, economic and social marginalization of the poor, the effects of poverty are particularly damaging to the family structure and to the prospects for social integration. In this regard, need for adequate consideration of the social dimension in the design and implementation of structural adjustment programmes should be addressed.

25. It is evident from the statistical data on Africa's per capita income that poverty in Africa is on the increase. In 1985, over 105 million Africans were deemed to be living in poverty and by 1990 that number had increased to 216 million. The projected figures for 2000 indicate that about half of the region's population, that is about 304 million people, will be living in poverty. For Africa as a whole, per capita income declined from $732 in 1980 to $654 in 1992, or at an average annual rate of 1 per cent. Real per capita income in the sub-Saharan region alone declined from $563 in 1980 to $485 in 1992.

5. Environment

26. Environmental issues, including recurring droughts and scarce water resources, desertification, energy deficiencies, fragile soils, over-urbanization and habitat, are some of the challenges facing Africa today.

6. Food security, food production and agro-industries

27. Africa is essentially an agricultural and pastoral region, yet food and agricultural production and productivity have declined substantially since the 1960s. In 1994, about 25 per cent of food requirements will need to be met through imports from abroad and food aid. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), more than half of those countries that

have critical food levels belong to sub-Saharan Africa. The food crisis in Africa is not totally caused by factors such as drought, desertification and other natural factors. Other factors in the decline of food production include neglect of agriculture and rural development policies and political instability. Stable and sustained efforts are needed to enhance production and related infrastructure, storage and marketing capacity to promote food security.

7. Diversification of African economies

28. There is a need to pursue diversification of African economies by expanding their potential production capacity and trade base, thus providing more opportunities not only to increase exports in the traditional sector, but also to explore access to new markets and orient the pattern of production to address local needs.

8. External debt burden

29. The African continent has become the world's biggest debtor. About 20 of Africa's 52 countries have debts in excess of their gross national product (GNP). 2/ Africa's external debt indicators have further deteriorated, rising from 97.6 per cent of GNP in 1991 to 98.7 per cent in 1992. The debt to export ratio has risen from 327.5 per cent in 1991 to 377.5 per cent in 1992, while the actual ratio of debt service to export earnings has risen from 30.1 per cent to 35 per cent in 1992.

9. Inadequacy of external and internal financial resources for development

30. Africa has been experiencing a decline in its own savings rate (government, household and corporate), while net factor payments abroad have increased. Domestic savings have fallen well below the level necessary to finance even the maintenance and replacement of the existing capital stock, let alone net additions to productive capital. The situation has been all the more grave with increasing claims on domestic savings by growing debt-servicing obligations. If not addressed, low levels of domestic savings will mean that African countries will have to resort to higher external borrowing to finance their development.

31. To return to a path of sustainable growth and development, Africa needs external resources to supplement domestic efforts in the short and medium term. At this crucial juncture, there has also been a decline in financial resource flows to Africa, 3/ affecting over 30 countries pursuing the implementation of strong structural adjustment programmes and reforms. Sustained efforts are needed in the short and medium terms to expand inflows of external resources to initiate and accelerate economic recovery and development. Over the longer term, sustained efforts are needed to promote domestic growth through the effective mobilization of domestic resources.

10. Regional cooperation and integration

32. With the coming into force of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, Africa will strive to constitute a credible economic and trading bloc. It should be recalled that the first phase (five years) of this endeavour will be the strengthening of existing regional economic communities in west, eastern, central, southern and north Africa.

11. Other critical issues and challenges

33. These include defining the role of the African State and its institutions with the aim of sustaining political reform; enhancing national cohesion; improving the quality of economic governance; and facilitating balanced rural and urban development.

IV. PRIORITY PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

A. Overview

34. The initial System-wide Plan, 1/ adopted in 1992, provided an overview of the activities of United Nations agencies and programmes in support of Africa, in accordance with their respective mandates.

35. The present revision to the System-wide Plan would not, therefore, aim at surveying the work of individual organizations. Its aim would be to bring together the organizations of the United Nations system for concerted action in priority areas agreed upon.

36. Based on the latest assessment of Africa's socio-economic situation and the continent's critical issues and challenges, and taking into account the directions of intergovernmental bodies, the revised System-wide Plan would identify key priority areas in which common strategies and shared objectives could be pursued through cooperative or joint action by several organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. In so doing, the revised System-wide Plan would help focus system-wide efforts and use limited resources for the realization of shared objectives. There is no implicit priority in the sequencing of the areas of activities identified in the revised Plan. The idea is that if action could converge on these priorities concurrently, then the benefit for individual countries will be discernible.

37. CPC made specific reference in the System-wide Plan to the dynamic and diversified role of women as development actors at all levels. Instead of devoting a special chapter to women in development, the revised Plan will incorporate the role of women in key sectors, such as agricultural production, human resource development and capacity-building, in order to treat the role of women as part of the mainstream of the development process.

38. Another fundamental consideration in the economic recovery and development of Africa is the promotion of a culture of peace, including security, democracy, human rights, tolerance, conflict prevention, management and resolution,

accountability, transparency and popular participation. Furthermore, in situations of natural and man-made disasters, short-term emergency and relief efforts should be geared towards long-term rehabilitation and development.

D. Priority areas and United Nations system support programmes

39. The priority areas identified for the revised System-wide Plan are human resource development and capacity-building; food, agriculture and agro-based industries; diversification of African economies; mobilization of external and domestic financial resources; growth, equity and sustainable development; and regional cooperation and integration. Each priority area will be addressed according to the following structure:

(a) Problems addressed;

(b) Goals and objectives;

(c) Proposed strategies;

(d) United Nations support programmes;

(e) Enabling factors at the African regional level;

(f) Level of resources required and available.

40. Human resource development and capacity-building. United Nations system support programmes in this area will be as follows:

(a) Population policies (United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Bank, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), FAO);

(b) Popular participation, specifically in rural development (ECA, World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat));

(c) Health and control of major diseases, for example, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria (World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO));

(d) Strengthening women as actors of development at all levels (UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, UNIFEM, ECA, UNDP, ILO, UNFPA, Habitat);

(e) Basic education, especially for youth and women (with a focus on job creation) (UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, UNDP, WHO, WFP);

(f) Entrepreneurship development, management, training and skills (UNDP, World Bank, ILO, Department for Development Support and Management Services, ECA).

41. Food, agriculture and agro-based industries. United Nations system support programmes in this area will be as follows:

(a) Intensified efforts for early-warning systems (FAO, ECA, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), WFP, IFAD);

(b) Policies and programmes for national food security and nutritional improvement (FAO, World Bank, UNDP, WFP, IFAD, UNIFEM);

(c) Policy, programmes and investment requirements for enhancing agricultural production (FAO, World Bank, WFP, UNDP, IFAD, UNIFEM);

(d) Food processing, trading and distribution (FAO, UNIDO, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Bank, WFP, IFAD, ECA);

(e) Strengthening capacities of African women agricultural producers (UNDP, FAO, IFAD, ECA);

(f) Rehabilitation of African infrastructure, particularly in sectors supporting agriculture (FAO, WFP, ECA, World Bank, UNDP, UNIDO, IFAD).

42. Diversification of African economies. United Nations system support programmes in this area will be as follows:

(a) Establishment of a diversification fund for African commodities (UNCTAD, FAO, ECA, World Bank, UNIDO, UNDP);

(b) Regional and national workshops or seminars to strengthen the structures for and to ensure development of diversification projects that could benefit from existing funding mechanisms (World Bank, UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNDP, ECA, FAO);

(c) Diversification oriented to local and subregional needs (UNDP, FAO, ECA, UNIDO, UNIFEM);

(d) Building capacities to process natural resources (UNDP, World Bank, UNIDO, Department for Development Support and Management Services, ECA).

43. Mobilization of external and domestic financial resources. United Nations system support programmes in this area will be as follows:

(a) Policy incentives and measures to improve domestic savings by households, enterprises and the State (UNCTAD, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), UNDP, ECA, UNICEF);

(b) Establishment of efficient domestic intermediating institutions for the mobilization of resources and their channelling to efficient applications (Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Department for

Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, World Bank, IMF, ECA, UNCTAD, IFAD).

44. Growth, equity and sustainable development. United Nations system support programmes in this area will be as follows:

(a) Enhancing the environment for economic growth (UNCTAD, World Bank, IMF, ECA, UNDP, FAO, UNIFEM);

(b) Investment promotion, including foreign direct investment (UNCTAD, World Bank, IMF, UNDP, FAO, UNICEF);

(c) Minimizing the social cost of adjustment and assisting vulnerable groups (World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, ECA, UNESCO, WHO, WFP, FAO);

(d) Environmental protection and natural resources management (UNEP, Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Department for Development Support and Management Services, World Bank, UNDP, FAO, Habitat, ECA, UNIFEM);

(e) Provision and maintenance of basic infrastructures and services, especially water supply and sanitation (UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, World Bank, UNFPA, Habitat, UNICEF);

(f) Urban management and promotion of settlement policies (Habitat, UNHCR, Department for Development Support and Management Services, ECA, UNICEF).

45. Regional cooperation and integration. United Nations system support programmes in this area will be as follows:

(a) Enhancing intra-African trade (ECA, UNCTAD, World Bank, UNDP, FAO);

(b) Upgrading transport and communication and energy infrastructure (World Bank, UNDP, ECA, UNCTAD);

(c) Promoting multinational production ventures, especially in basic industries (World Bank, UNIDO, ECA).

V. RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION

46. A number of United Nations entities, including the international financial institutions, have established special funds and programmes for African development. The actual utilization of these funds and their effectiveness should be reviewed and action taken accordingly. Based on the review of recent trends in the flow of multilateral resources to Africa and their availability, particularly from the United Nations system, concrete and practical recommendations will be made.

47. In recent years, emergency situations, both natural and man-made, have increased dramatically in Africa. Accordingly, increasing resources have been required for relief operations. However, the emergency requirement should not

be met at the expense of development resources. Additionality should be stressed. The United Nations system needs to continue to address these issues. The resources needed for development cooperation against their availability and the need for emergency operations should be highlighted.

VI. COORDINATION

48. To maximize the impact of United Nations system activities for the implementation of the New Agenda, concerted efforts of all entities are needed to develop shared strategies and utilize the scarce resources effectively. Cooperation and coordination among the various organizations of the United Nations system in the implementation of the New Agenda should therefore be strengthened. In addition to existing ACC machinery that provides adequate opportunities for close coordination, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Africa and the newly established Panel of High-Level Personalities on African Development provide the fora for coordination. Should the above structures be properly utilized, the System-wide Plan could become a useful instrument for a cooperative approach by the system in Africa.

49. For practical working arrangements, a lead agency will be designated for each priority area and will coordinate the work of the United Nations system in that particular subject. A number of core cooperative agencies will work with the lead agency to achieve the objectives. The lead agency will submit a status report on the designated subject every year. In order to facilitate coordination, the lead agency, in consultation with the cooperative agencies, will develop appropriate arrangements for consultation.

VII. REVIEW AND MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SYSTEM-WIDE PLAN

50. The necessity to monitor and assess action taken by the United Nations system on Africa and to report to relevant intergovernmental bodies is an important aspect of the System-wide Plan. It is complemented by United Nations organizations reporting separately to their governing bodies according to their established arrangements.

51. The difficulty encountered during the final review of UNPAAERD was that United Nations organizations were not structured to report on their additional activities for Africa. This did not facilitate the measuring of their achievements beyond the regular mandate, and thus did not give a clear picture of their additional efforts.

52. The close link between the monitoring of the System-wide Plan and that of the New Agenda is an advantage, in view of the coordination role played by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the Secretariat and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Africa. They can make reporting more focused and adapt it to the needs and objectives of the intergovernmental body to which the report is destined.

Notes

1/ Relevant documents to consult on this matter are E/AC.51/1991/CRP.1, E/AC.51/1992/L.5/Add.34/Rev.1 and E/AC.51/1992/5.

2/ New African, London, November 1993, No. 313, p. 12.

3/ See A/48/336 and Corr.1.

4/ E/AC.51/1992/5.